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Bernard Corrigan House  
1200 West 55th Street  
Kansas City  
Jackson County  
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1862

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BERNARD CORRIGAN HOUSE

HABS No. MO-1862

Location: 1200 West 55th Street, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Significance: Building has architectural significance as an important regional example of the Prairie Style, designed by Kansas City architect Louis S. Curtiss. The building was among the earliest residential structures in Kansas City to make extensive use of reinforced concrete.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1912-1913
2. Architect: Louis S. Curtiss
3. Original and subsequent owners:

Bernard Corrigan: to 1913  
Patrick J. White: 1914 to 1917  
Joseph J. Heim: 1917-1923  
Robert J. Sutherland: 1923-1941  
Mrs. Robert J. Sutherland: 1941-?

4. Contractor: firm owned by Bernard Corrigan
5. Suppliers: Possibly Kokomo Opalescent Glass Company of Kokomo, Indiana for window glass

B. Historical Context:

Bernard Corrigan made his fortune as a contractor, street railway magnate, and real estate speculator. Born in Quebec in 1847, he came to Kansas City in 1868. He married twice, fathering ten children by his first wife and eight by his second. By 1911, only six children remained at home with their parents, and Corrigan decided to leave a large house in a declining neighborhood near downtown. However, Corrigan died suddenly in January, 1913, only two months before the scheduled move to the new house on West 55th Street. His widow sold the property in 1914.

The site Corrigan picked for the house seems to indicate his acumen as a real estate operator, for he predicted the growth of Kansas City's most valuable suburban real estate development. He paid \$15,000 for the lot which, in 1911, stood in area which was still largely woods, fields, and pastures, and had been incorporated into the city only two years previously. However, the lot was contiguous to a roadway designated to be a boulevard, and which already had an easement for a street car line. An exclusive Catholic school for girls had also recently opened in the area, and roughly one mile to the east of the Corrigan lot was the nucleus of a planned residential development launched by a young builder named J.C. Nichols. Within a few years, Nichols' prestigious development, known as the Country Club district, had encompassed the lot Corrigan chose for his house.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Corridan house contains elements from several sources, but on the whole incorporates the most elements of the Prairie School architecture, particularly in the horizontality of the composition. Decorative detail also shows the influence of Art Nouveau.
2. Condition of fabric: good

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Building is a three-story structure over a full basement. House is about one-hundred feet long north to south. The west wing is forty-five feet wide at its widest point, and thirty feet wide to the south. The east wing measures approximately sixty by thirty feet.
2. Foundations: Reinforced concrete
3. Walls: Walls are faced with gray shot-sawn limestone from Carthage, Missouri. Wood trim is painted a slightly deeper grey.
4. Structural system: Steel frame covered with concrete
5. Porches, stoops, balconies: See photographs. Porte cochere on north facade measures about twenty-two by seventeen feet.

6. Openings: According to source used, the actual maker of the art glass used in windows and doors is unknown; however, the Kokomo Opalescent Glass Company of Kokomo, Indiana, probably supplied the glass itself. Windows were originally fitted with internal screens intended not to lessen the effect of the art glass windows from the outside.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Full basement contains laundry, heating, and cooling facilities.
- b. First floor: Entrance hall features two expanses of stained glass, the main entrance doorway and the large window which fills most of the south wall. The entablature between the lower and upper transoms of the doorway is a near copy in plaster of the exterior masonry ornamentation. The architrave above the transom is not as complex as that on the exterior, and takes the form of a flat arch with centered keystone. Lamps which duplicate the exterior ones flank the main door on the interior. The ceiling of the entrance hall is two stories high, rising to the roof. Oak beams line the ceiling.

The staircase makes one long run to a landing, and then a short run to the second floor. The large newel consists of a single carved piece of granite, tessellated with alternating black and gray strips, similar to the boarder design of the stained-glass windows. Ridged stone is utilized in the center of the steps, but the outer sections, treads and risers, are of gray marble blocks, matching the newel. Alternating black and gray tesserae are set into the pier below the clock.

At its northern end, the entryway merges into a hallway; this leads to the porte cochere at the end of the house. A large closet and a half bath occupy the area just east of the foyer.

The east wing contains only two rooms. One is the living room, which has a large marble fireplace on the north wall. Doors containing leaded glass panels separate the living room from the conservatory or morning room beyond.

In the west wing, the room farthest south is a parlor, labelled a "music room" in early plans for the house. Its ceiling is segmentally arched and lightly patterned in a low relief design of scrollwork.

The dining room occupies the center of the west wing. The walls are wood-panelled. To the north of the dining room is an oval-shaped breakfast room, fitted into the projecting bay of the west facade. Built-in cabinets flank a modest fireplace on the east wall of the breakfast room.

Between the breakfast room and the kitchen is the polygonal butler's pantry, with direct access to the dining room. Cabinets line one wall. All cabinets have sliding glass doors. A large marble sink, original to the house, fits under the window on the west wall. The kitchen itself has been modernized. A hallway connecting the kitchen and butler's pantry to the front and back entrances contains access to a back staircase.

- c. Second floor: Source is considerably less clear on floor plans. Second floor contains at least four bedrooms for family use, one servant's room, two bathrooms, and a linen room.
- d. Third floor: Covers both wings of the house, and originally contained a game room, as well as servants' quarters, bathrooms, and storage areas.

- 2. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered and painted walls and ceilings typical throughout.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: House is located on a wedged-shaped lot of two-and-a-half acres. The eastern border, which curves along the boulevard, measures 430 feet. The south and west edges are roughly 350 feet long, and intersect at right angles. The fourth boundary measures 185 feet and is roughly perpendicular to Ward Parkway. The house is sited at the south center of the property, oriented toward 55th Street, with the main entrance set back eighty feet from the street. There are two driveways, one bisects the lot east-west, and the other moves north-south down the west edge of the property. Both lead to the garage, located sixty feet west of the house.

2. Outbuildings: The property contains a combined garage and servants' quarters. Its ornamentation is a simplified version of that on the house, although the walls are surfaced with grey stucco rather than stone. The structure has two stories, with a one-story ell to the south, measuring roughly twenty-seven feet wide by fifty-six feet deep.

PART III. SOURCE OF INFORMATION

National Register of Historic Places nomination form, "Corrigan, Bernard, Residence." Compiled by Elaine B. Ryder, April, 1976.

Prepared by: Robert Buerglener  
HABS, August, 1988

ADDENDUM TO  
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